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ABSTRACT

Publications have been one of the primary delivery methods used by the Cooperative Extension Service. However, concerns have been expressed by Extension administrators about such problems as lack of new publications to address emerging demands, low supplies of useful publications, overproduced and/or outdated publications, inadequate budgets, and publications that are printed for the wrong reasons. To address some of these concerns at the program management and administrative level, a model for publication review is proposed. The model suggests the criteria for publication review by the program area, level of organization, and the subject-matter discipline. The model suggests that target audiences, duplication, and usefulness need to be reviewed at both the program and the discipline level of the organization. Factors to be considered in publication review include program priorities, cost, adequate supplies, target audience, duplication, usefulness, accuracy, and comprehensiveness. These review criteria for Extension publications consider the pluralistic nature of Extension programs, characteristics of audiences, budget constraints, and writers' biases. To implement the review criteria, administrators at program level and subject-matter specialists who are developing publications should have guidelines based on them. A review committee should be used to examine Extension publications before they reach the printing process. (KC)

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CRITERIA FOR REVIEWING PUBLICATIONS IN EXTENSION

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CRITERIA FOR REVIEWING PUBLICATIONS IN EXTENSION

Publications have been one of the primary delivery methods used by the Cooperative Extension Service. While use of this method is high, little has been done to address needs of administrators concerning publications.

Primary concerns often expressed by extension administrators regarding publications include: (1) the lack of new publications to address the emerging demands, (2) low supplies of useful publications, (3) overproduced and/or out dated publication, (4) inadequate budgets for publications, and (5) publications getting printed for the wrong purposes.

To address some of the above concerns at the program management and administrative level, the author propose the following model as a management aid to be used in making decisions relevant to Extension publications.

Review Process

The review of publications is a process of examining materials in relation to educational objectives of Extension programs as well as to the learning behavior of clientele (ECOP, 1981). Talmage (1981) said that analysis of publication must be descriptive rather than judgmental

and special attention should be given to considerations such as program costs, community interest groups, bias, and accuracy of the content. Crunkilton and Finch (1984) stated that selection of a publication must take into consideration several factors such as general description of the publication, readability, bias, accuracy, appropriateness, verbal and visual fluency, usefulness, and filing and storage ease.

Publication Review Model

The following model suggests the criteria for publication review by the program area, level of organization, and the subject matter discipline. However, the most practical review process is done at (1) program area level, and (2) discipline level of each program area. Figure 1 presents the appropriate review criteria to be considered at each level.

Place figure one here

Accordingly, target audiences, duplication, and usefulness need to be reviewed at both the program and the discipline level of the organization.

Program Priorities

Demand for publication among the four Extension program areas; Agriculture, Home Economics, 4-H, and Community Resource Development; and within a program area in Extension differs greatly. Use of program priorities as the basic criteria for evaluating the suitability of publications is most appropriate.

Cost

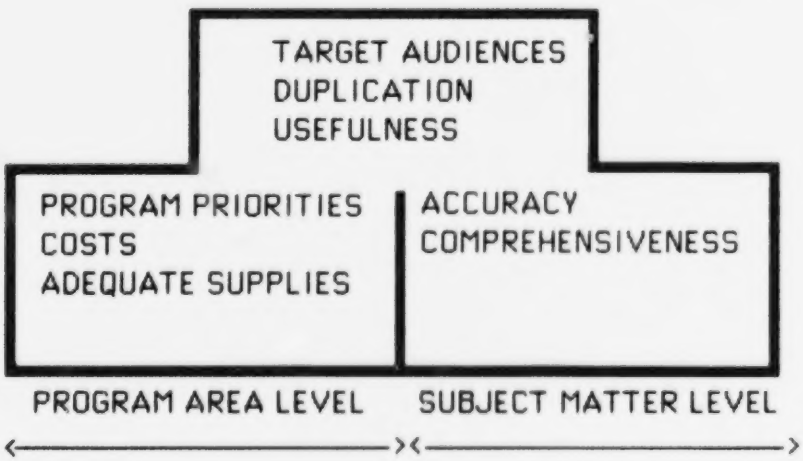

Figure 1: Review Criteria of Extension Publication

Publications must be cost effective in terms of their production and distribution related to other educational methods. There is information readily available to estimate costs of publications in accordance with types of publication. Thus, it is possible to make sure materials can be developed within budget constraints. Two important criteria are: (1) Can the publication be printed with available funds? and (2) Is a publication the most cost-effective method?

Adequate Supplies

Sufficient number of publications must be available in timely manner at the right place to support Extension programs. Production capacity of the publication unit, including timeliness of production and distribution, must be taken into consideration.

Target Audience

Extension educational programs are developed and delivered for specific target audiences; the publication must be written and designed for the appropriate audience level. Generally, each extension program has its own audiences. Thus, publications produced by Extension division must be relevant to those target audiences.

Duplication

Duplication or redundancy as a planned part of an educational program can be desirable. However, duplication as a result of department or college competition has a negative effect on programs. The program area administration must encourage cooperation between disciplines and minimize duplication as a result of departmental conflicts. Departments must evaluate publications to eliminate embarrassing duplication within subject matter areas.

Usefulness

Publications must be effective in meeting the expectations of audiences and Extension personnel. Although an objective look at the usefulness of the publication is rather difficult during the planing process, subjective judgement of usefulness is possible. However, it is important to conduct long term research to determine the objective usefulness of various publications.

Accuracy

Accuracy directly reflects on credibility of the author and affect the confidence the public places in the institution that prints the publication. Accuracy has a great influence on disseminating the message in simple form as well as on its readability. Editing and layout of the text during the production process will help improve the readability of a publication.

Comprehensiveness

Comprehensiveness is related to the completeness of the content covered in a publication. Because subject matter specialist often differ on their personal conceptualization in presenting ideas, it is necessary to check the comprehensiveness of Extension publications. Publications must be complete, precise, up-to-date, and relevant for the intended purpose.

Practical Feasibility of the Review Criteria

These review criteria for Extension publication consider the pluralistic nature of Extension programs, characteristics of audiences,

budget constraints, and writers' biases. The criteria are simple enough to use and their use could lead to printing of quality publications. Proposed criteria could be valuable for Extension personnel to review publications at the program area level as well as within the subject matter of each program area.

To implement the review criteria, it is important that review guidelines be available to administrators at program area level and to subject matter specialists who are developing Extension publications. Further, a review committee could be used to review the Extension publications before they reach the printing process. Such a review committee would be given authority to prescribe revision needed, to order reprints, to authorize new publications, and to discard or stop other publications.

Recommendations

Systematic use of these criteria in reviewing printed publication will help improve the quality of Extension publications in the future. Reviewing printed materials must be considered as a process and part of the Extension organization. A publication coordinator could facilitate decisions concerning reprints and revisions without going through the committee. The author make following recommendations:

1. Extension publications should be reviewed at both the academic discipline level and the program area level.
2. The criteria outlined should form the basis for the review at each level

FOOTNOTES

Crunkilton, J. R & Finch, C.R. (1984). *Curriculum Development in Vocational and technical Education*. Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon, Inc.

ECOP (1981). *Extension's Role: Strengthening American families*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska.

Talmage, H. (1981). Selecting instructional materials: The antecedents of selection. *Curriculum Review, 2*, 9-13.